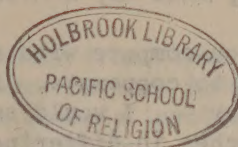


# Japan Christian Activity News

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IN THIS ISSUE:

CCA ASSEMBLY IMPRESSIONS & PERSPECTIVES  
ASIA WOMEN'S CHALLENGES  
YOUTH MISSION  
PROFILE: CCA'S FOUR PRESIDENTS



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*CCA Sixth Assembly*

IMPRESSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES: JOHN NAKAJIMA  
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*At the recent Sixth Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia held in Penang, Malaysia from May 30-June 9, 1977 John NAKAJIMA was elected into the Presidium. This interview by Jim TREECE gives JCAN readers a condensed and general view of the event. Since it is impossible to give a full account of everything that happened, we hope to put in more articles touching on specific themes for subsequent JCAN issues. (Eds.)*

Q. *How did this Assembly compare with that of four years ago?*

A. At the last Assembly, in 1973 in Singapore, I think you can say that CCA was reborn. Until then it had been the East Asian Christian Conference. Not only the name, but also the structure and leadership changed, and the headquarters, except for one or two functions, was centralized in Singapore. In the last four years CCA has seen a growth of the organization in many respects. This year, I saw a bigger assembly in number and quality. Although there were many shortcomings in procedural things, it was better organized than last time.

Of course, we have to realize and recognize the fact of certain inhibiting limitations. Many Asian countries are under severe governmental controls. Delegates from those countries have restrictions on their actions. This fact has not changed since the last Assembly. But still, I sense a growing eagerness to be sensitive to and understanding towards each other. Of course, there are some people, especially people at the grass roots level, who are suffering throughout Asia and others in this Assembly who were frustrated by the lack of involvement by the CCA Assembly as such in the human rights struggle. But in all of this we can trust on God's guidance. In fact, I think in a clear way I can say I've witnessed the working of the Holy Spirit in this Assembly.

Q. *What do you think came out of this Assembly itself, the period while you were working in Penang?*

A. In the first place were the discussions. On several occasions we had very heated discussions, both in the plenary and in the sections. And sometimes we felt that agreement would never be reached. But we came out beautifully, not through compromise with each other, but as a result of the dialogue, we came out in agreement on the issues. Issues which were recorded in the minutes and the recommendations coming out of the section meetings--recommendations for the future of the CCA, in the three fields: Message and Communication, Life and Action, Justice and Service. And if you read the reports carefully, I think you can notice the effort made in the respective

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sections. Furthermore, what is important is the sense of unity and the willingness to cooperate as Asians, including Australia and New Zealand, in the cause of participating in God's mission here in this region.

Q. *Do you feel there was a greater sense of cooperation this time, than in the past, that is, a movement towards understanding between national churches?*

A. If you compare with four years ago, yes. I can sense there's more willingness to cooperate. But thinking objectively, if you were an objective observer, I would say that it is a very, very difficult task for the churches in differing situations in Asia, to cooperate in certain kinds of issues. For instance, there are countries where almost everything critical of the governments is considered pro-Communist. But in other countries, communism as such has a place in society. So if we think in terms of these ideological differences, especially in the policies of human rights, these peoples of different countries seem to be unable to cooperate in certain kinds of issues.

So in the first place it's a difficult task for the institutional churches to cooperate in different situations. But there are other means of cooperation, because wherever we are, there are people who want to follow in Jesus' steps, and have a common goal. The past four years CCA has worked towards establishing a close linkage among the peoples of different countries--working for solidarity with each other, working in mission, in service, and for justice in each given situation.

Q. *What do you see as the particular role or task of Japan and the Japanese church in all of this, and how will you bear that task in mind as you serve in CCA?*

A. Well, I expected severe criticism against Japan in this Assembly, but in fact it never came out so clearly in any of the discussions or any of the reports of the Assembly...

Q. *Would you have preferred more criticism?*

A. Yes. Well, I think someone should have said more concretely ....this is one of the things which I meant when I spoke of the "limited nature" of the Assembly. No single country could be named in any of the official statements or official discussions, because it might have jeopardized the security of the people participating in the Assembly when they went home.

This extended to the issue of Japan's economic involvement in Asian countries. Although it was never mentioned in a concrete way, the feeling was there, and this issue remains a live fuse. For instance, in Bangkok there are about 8,000 Japanese living there; Hong Kong has about 9,000; Singapore has about 6,000. All these Asian cities have that kind of mass Japanese population, which is nothing but a sign of Japanese economic penetration.

We Japanese on the whole are rather ignorant of how our economic policies have maleffects on the plight of the people in Asian countries. Although I must admit there must be some good in the economic assistance from Japan, this little good is overshadowed, at least in the people's minds in those Asian countries, by the maleffects of Japan's involvement.

Many Japanese are pretty ignorant of what we did in Southeast Asian countries during the second world war, whereas there are many, many people who remember the suffering forced upon them by the Japanese military. And now, many people are suffering under the economic pressure of the Japanese. This kind of thing has to be made clear, I think, to rouse the concern of conscientious Japanese people. At least, I think there are conscientious

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tious people in Japan, too!

As a church, Christians in Japan, though in a minority, have a responsibility to build just relationships with the people in those countries by working with the people in those countries who are making efforts for their own human rights, and by making efforts to influence our own government's policies towards these foreign countries.

Fortunately, all of the people who attended the Assembly from Japan are pretty conscious of this kind of problem, and are eager to work towards just relationships with these countries. So I think Japan's involvement in the CCA should be taken seriously by the Japanese churches.

Q. *Would you comment on how you see your role in establishing this work of the Japanese church within Asia. Do you feel you are representing Japan, or do you feel a calling to represent all of Asia?*

A. There are four presidents according to region. I represent Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan. And I'm especially happy to say that this time I had full support from our Korean brothers and sisters.

Of course, I am a Japanese and represent Japan, but I think I have a responsibility to represent the concerns of the Christians of these other three countries as well. As a Japanese, what I can do is... Japan is still a comparatively free country, where information can be gathered fairly well, and this information should be shared with other Asian countries, because information is one of the best arms in the struggle for justice and peace.

Q. *How, then, do you see the next four years for the Christian Conference of Asia?*

A. I think the next four years in the history of the whole of Asia is very critical. Nobody can predict anything in our region. Nobody, for instance, four years ago could have predicted the rise and fall of the of the liberal democratic movement in Thailand. Likewise, we can never predict what will happen in the near future in Asia. But many sense that the next four years will be critical in the history of Asia.

The Christian Conference of Asia is there to participate in the making of history in Asia, according to what God wills. We can't get away from the reality of history, just by dreaming about the world to come. The Christian Conference of Asia is there to participate positively, in that history.

Q. *Which goals of CCA do you think have the greatest likelihood of being reached in the near future?*

A. The Assembly did not make clear particular fields of CCA functions in the future, but it did approve the continuation of the priorities on the human rights issue. For the past two or three years, CCA has set three areas for priorities: hunger, human rights and theological reflection. And we said at some point that we are going to continue to see these goals as priorities in the near future as well.

Together with that, I emphasized another factor, when I was being interviewed by the press there. I said the word is reconciliation: reconciliation not only with the world, but among ourselves. Christians in different situations have different ideologies, and we seem sometimes like we will never be reconciled. As a conference of Asian Christians, we ought to deal with this issue, by providing a platform on which differing opinions can be presented, and we can have dialogue and reconciliation with each other.

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Pre-Assembly Meet  
ASIAN WOMEN'S CHALLENGES  
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The first Asia Women's Forum was held in Penang, Malaysia for a five-day period preceeding the Sixth Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia. Addressing the theme, "Asian Women Confront, Challenge and Change," about 100 women shared experiences and discussed four aspects of life: a) Church and Women, b) Women and Men, c) Socio-Economic Realities, and d) Oppressive Systems. Discussions ranged from such general topics as theology and the human potential of women, to such specific issues as prostitution-oriented tourism, family planning and poverty, the dowry system and women political prisoners.

Representatives from 14 countries participated in the Forum. However, neither the delegates from Taiwan nor the keynote speakers from Korea and the Philippines were permitted to come. In addition to the Christian delegates were three representatives from other religions--Hindu, Buddhist and Moslem.

Some of the ideas presented to challenge the Forum were:

"Women's liberation is part of a wider process of humanization and liberation of all people."

"Women in Asia have long been and still are being hampered in many ways and prevented from living a full life. What should be realized is that a better woman is a better human being and has a great contribution to make towards a better nation and society. Even our Christian religion has to some extent played a part in keeping women down."

"Women and men are like two wheels of a cart, that have to go along together smoothly. Women have to play a significant role to build a classless society. They can play a vital role in the development of the country as a whole."

"When children are a source of income and security, family planning has no basis. An alternative basis for removing poverty and providing security must be instituted before any successful implementation of family planning is possible."

"The fear of rape limits women's freedom, and conditions their behavior. Rape also occurs within marriage."

"We, the oppressed of the world, do not want your pity, your tears, or even your prayers. We want you to be angry."

As discussions continued and challenges were presented the aspirations of the participants increased. One of the participants said, "In my small group at the Forum we had a very special woman from the Philippines--perhaps one of today's saints. When she left us, we sat in awe and asked ourselves why she made us all feel ten feet tall like people of worth. We decided that, because she bore the scars of the Cross, she came to us with power and effectiveness. And because she really believed in us, she drew forth in us new strength."

The Korean church in Japan representative made a deep impression on the Women's Forum. Included in the 22 recommendations taken from the Forum to the CCA Assembly was one that said, "We call on the CCA to demonstrate actively its concern for the plight of all minority people, with particular focus on Koreans in Japan."

Another recommendation, one of the issues of concern coming from the Japanese delegation, was directed at prostitution-oriented tourism: "because this is a worsening problem in most Asian countries, we recommend that an expose be initiated by means of publications and audio-visuals to be used by the member churches. We call upon the CCA to recognize the international dimensions relating to prostitution--its link with tourism, multinationals, the presence of foreign military personnel, racist and sexist attitudes."

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Experiences related to the continued detention of the Naxalites and other political prisoners in India, and similar problems in many other Asian countries were shared. Violence rose in protest against the continued detention of political prisoners, particularly women prisoners, and the support of families of political prisoners was urged.

Stereotyped roles for women was another issue that generated heated discussion. The description of woman's role in society reads, "We find that the structure of our society is such that men and women are forced into limiting stereotyped roles from birth, and are then conditioned by words, attitudes and education." A strong denunciation of the dowry system as a social evil was issued. The realization grew that the CCA and all its member churches should take immediate steps to eliminate sexist language in all their publications, e.g. church liturgies, hymn books, magazines and other public communications. This will include ways of referring to God so as not to convey the idea that God is masculine. God is neither male nor female, but transcends both. In particular, the women urge that the constitutions of all member churches be amended to use terminology and syntax so that women and men alike will see that both have an equal place in structures of the church. In order to uphold the dignity of women the stigma attached to being a single woman, whether widowed, divorced or unmarried was confronted: "we condemn the treatment of women as second class citizens and seek to bring about a new awareness among members as to the equal value of women as human beings."

Military government, authoritarian systems, the super-powers with opposing ideologies were strongly denounced and the genuine aspirations of ordinary people were the central issues of discussion. Discrimination on the basis of sex, lack of education and traditionalism were all seen as handicaps and sparked many recommendations. Many deeply rooted forces working against women in Asia were seriously questioned. The younger participants have high visions and hope to change the obstructing structures in society.

Ten consultants from the Women's Forum were chosen to participate in the CCA Sixth Assembly and four women were included among the 17 members of the General Committee of the CCA for the next four years.

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#### ASIA YOUTH MISSION

A nine-day mission from May 14-23, organized by the CCA Youth Department saw around 120 youths from 15 countries in action experience and later in reflection on three issues: Self-Reliance, Life Style and Human Rights. Delegates from Japan were: from the Korean Christian Church in Japan: LEE Kwi Yang (male), KIM Bang Shik, OH Young Tae, and LEE Hyeja (all female); from West Tokyo Union Church, TODA Shigeru (male); and from Kyodan (United Church of Christ in Japan), SASAKI Masako (female).

The composition of the delegates as shown above are but a symbolic reflection of "youth mission" as such in Japan. Youth concerns as such both on local church and denominational levels do not really make sense...young people are active on different separate issues, being more issue-oriented. It is hard to point out youth groups, except with the Korean Church.

Mr. Toda, the only blind person at the Hong Kong Assembly made a contribution on the point of human rights issues of minorities including handicapped people. Discrimination is practiced not only on the ethnic minorities but on the handicapped too.

One of the points the delegates saw common interest was to work for the young

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political detainees in Asia. In the final recommendation the CCA was called on to develop documentation on human rights in Asia, especially the cases of young political detainees, and to disseminate such information for campaigns and education within member churches.

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*Profile*

CCA'S FOUR PRESIDENTS

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CCA's four presidents share in the chairing of meetings of the Assembly and the General and Executive Committees. They are voting members of both General Committee and Executive Committee. In the election of the four, the variety of geographical and cultural regions in the CCA constituency was taken into account by the Assembly.

The Most Reverend Keith RAYNER, 47

Archbishop of the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide

World Conference of Christian Youth in Kottayam, 1952

CCA Workshop on Theology in Action, Manila, 1972

Rev. John Masaaki WAKAJIMA, 48

General Secretary of National Christian Council of Japan

Minister, United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan)

Member, CCA Executive Committee, 1973-77

Chairman, Japanese Committee on Emergency Korean Problems

Moderator, WCC Urban-Industrial Mission Advisory Committee

Member, WCC Commission on World Mission & Evangelism

Dr. Kosong SRISANG, 39

General Secretary, Church of Christ in Thailand

Member, WCC Central Committee, WCC Commission of the

Churches' Participation in Development (CCPD)

WCC Fund for the Reconciliation and Reconstruction of

Indochina (FRRI)

Ms. Nimalka FERNANDO, 23

Associate General Secretary of the Student Christian Movement  
in Sri Lanka

Student, B.Th Degree as external student of Serampore

Editorial Assistant, Christian Literature Society in Colombo

(1973-76)

WSCF Asian Leadership Development Centre, WSCF General

Assembly in Sri Lanka, 1973

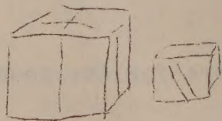
SCM Triennial Conference, India, 1973

Conference for Christian Communicators (CCA sponsored)

Hong Kong, 1975

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